



Notes from the Consultant's Corner

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Forget the Coffee Break! Take a Stress Break!

Have you ever found yourself so busy that the entire day has passed and you still haven't gone to the bathroom? You're not alone. Many of you working in busy veterinary hospitals find little time to take care of yourself, but taking care of yourself- even in small ways - is very important in preventing illness and burnout.

Learn how to take stress breaks...short, small activities that are tailor made just for you. We humans are creatures of habit and it is important to make stress breaks a habit in your everyday work. Most people operate under the misconception that on-the-job stress reduction must be time consuming and unrealistic. This does not have to be the case. Even short activities can help lower your stress and make your day less intense. The key is finding activities that personally nurture or energize you.

Stress Buster Ideas:

- Breathe deeply
- Walk or jog around your pet hospital a few times
- Eat a small nutritious snack (although an occasional "indulgent" treat is an excellent stress buster!)
- Drink lots of water



(photo from Dreamstime.com)

- Tell a joke or listen to one
- Stretch your arms, neck, back, and any other part of your body that carries tension

- Clean or vacuum (the physical activity is a perfect way to blow off steam and will make your workspace nice and clean)
- Listen to music...sing or dance along
- Share pictures of family/friends/vacations—tell stories
- Love an animal (they will benefit too)
- Give a hug
- GO TO THE BATHROOM! (waiting all day is not good for your body)

How Do I Start Managing My Stress at Work?

- Create your own personal list of stress busters—the more creative, the better. Don't worry what other people will think. We all respond to stress differently and respond to different things. What things make you laugh? What areas of your body carry the most tension? What kinds of images relax you the most? Post your list in a visible spot in your workspace.
- Make a commitment to yourself and stick to it. There will always be a reason not to take a stress break. Decide that you are worth the effort and ask co-workers to support you. It may feel strange at first, but once you get in the habit of self-care, it will become second nature.
- Be sensible in your timing and choice of stress breaks. Self-care does not have to compromise patient or client service. Obviously, you cannot stretch your muscles during a medical emergency, but you certainly can when calling back a client. Don't sabotage your efforts by making poor choices.
- Support your co-workers in taking stress breaks too. You can create a much more positive and healthy work environment if everyone makes self-care a priority.